

Spring 2025 Lawns to Legumes Grants

Doug Cook, LAPOA Board Member

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is accepting applications for spring 2025 Lawns to Legumes pollinator habitat grants.

Apply online at Blue Thumb’s website. Applications will be accepted through November 30, 2024. If you previously applied for the program, you will need to reapply to be considered for spring 2025 funding.

The Lawns to Legumes program aims to increase habitat for at-risk pollinators in residential settings across the state by providing people with reimbursement-based funding, workshops, coaching and gardening resources. Anyone who lives in Minnesota and has a yard, deck, or other outdoor space for planting can apply to be reimbursed for up to \$400 in costs associated with establishing new pollinator habitat in their yards. The program is available to both Minnesota homeowners and renters.

More than 5,000 residential habitat projects across all 87 Minnesota counties have been funded since the program launched in 2019. Lawns to Legumes shares online resources such as gardening templates, habitat guides and advice about selecting native plants for all Minnesotans interested in creating pollinator habitat in their yards. Lawns to Legumes receives funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and the state General Fund.

For more information about Lawns to Legumes, visit BWSR’s website.

LALID Winter 2024 Article

Ron Wieber, LALID Treasurer

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025 WEED CONTROL

Every Fall the Lake Alexander Lake Improvement District (LA LID) tax levy needs to be formally assessed -as voted upon at our annual summer meeting. This upcoming 2025 remains unchanged from 2024 - an annual levy of \$200 per riparian lake owner. A very slight change in the total number of assessed property owners in 2024 down one from 487 to now 486. Although one less payee in 2025, in 2024 we benefited from a seven-thQusand-dollar Morrison County grant via State of MN to help pay for some of our costs limited to surveying {56%}, treatment {6%} and educational materials {98%}.

Our primary expense is of course invasive weed management - surveying and treating twice a year. In 2024 we finally won approval from the Minnesota Dept. Of Natural Resources to treat all of the independent survey documented acreage. This Spring three patches totaling 16 acres for Curly leaf Pondweed treatment. And this late summer for fourteen patches of Eurasian Water Milfoil for treatment with the same number 30 acres as last year. Unfortunately, currently no management practices are avaiabte to us to combat the abundant zebra mussels.

Water quality and weed counts are being routinely checked on Lake Alexander. However, increasingly more varieties of invasive species are spreading across the United States as the climate warms although primarily in the South Eastern and East Coast states and around Lake Erie. I have certainly noticed a significant increase in our sustained elevated surface water temperature this summer.

The LA LID budget is in recovery mode after years of low assessments resulting in a declining savings account reserve balance in order to keep up with current expenses and inflation. All in an, we are posed for another successful year in carrying out our mission in 2025. Again, my annual thank you for your annual summer meeting presence and continued financial support which makes all of this possible!

Lake Alexander Property Owners Association

NEWSLETTER

November 2024



Dear LAPOA members,

It’s the final week of October as I compose this Fall version of the President’s Letter to everyone. Another season has come and gone, and fall has arguably set in (considering the drought since the beginning of September and warm weather, it has hardly felt like fall...). I guess many will wonder what this bodes for the upcoming winter, especially considering the last, time will soon to tell. Water levels have dropped considerably since mid-August, and I would suggest in the 10 inch range thus far and continuing to do so, a good thing for many of us including my wife Michelle and I. And since we had our Annual LAPOA/LALID combined meeting the second Saturday in August, with our usual 100+ membership in attendance, not much else of significance has occurred around the Lake, pretty quiet in other words! Needless to say, in this Author’s opinion the meeting was a success and it was great to see all the familiar faces in attendance, so on behalf of the LAPOA we thank everyone for their continued support.

On another note related to the membership, at our final Board meeting in mid-October, Treasurer Alice shared that we hit a new high for paid membership this fall at approximately 350, well done and kudos to our Property Owners for the strong show of support! There have continued to not be any bog issues of any sort, another positive for all around the Lake!! The Fall clean-up was held on Saturday, September 14 and organized by Board Member Jim McGonigle (a HUGE thanks to Jim for overseeing the arrangement and live event!) and was a resounding success with 2 large roll-offs full of waste materials. We will improve on this year’s event by hopefully having the next one in 2 year’s time instead of waiting for 3 as there seems to be a need as witnessed this fall! Look for Jim’s detailed write-up reporting on the clean-up later in this Newsletter.

Finally, it’s time to “put down the pen” as they say and get this sent off to Secretary Darline for inclusion in the Newsletter. Thanks again all of you for your continued support and as I always remind folks, if you have any further questions or issues you would like the Board to consider, don’t hesitate to contact any of us at your convenience, the LAPOA is only as strong as its membership! Enjoy what’s left of fall and we wish all a wonderful Holiday season and winter, and look forward to seeing all of you next Spring!

On behalf of the Board, best wishes!
Dr. Bill, LAPOA President

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Mission Statement: To act as stewards of Lake Alexander in regards to water quality, fish management, and shore line conservation.

Where is the Water? (Part 2)

Cade Roberts, LAPOA Board Member

Those of you dedicated to reading the LAPOA biannual newsletter will remember this title, only slightly different. In May's newsletter I wrote an article title, "Where is the water?". In my initial drafts of that article, I planned to discuss how to deal with low water levels and different techniques and legalities you might run into in your pursuit of using the lake. This was in reaction to our drought summer and low snow winter in 2023. That draft was subsequently edited due to the incredible spring rains. Unfortunately for some, those spring rains continued into summer, peaking the lake level at 1277.34 ft NGVD 29, just 0.09 feet or 1.08 inches below the highest ever recording in June of 2001. As some may recognize, this is above the Ordinary High Water Mark of 1277 ft. This all culminated in many attending the Annual Meeting in August in hopes of a solution to the high water. As mentioned in the meeting, it was in God's hands.

Jump ahead to today: God has answered whoever prayed, spring and summer rains which brought nearly 20 inches of rain, subsided to bring us 2.00 inches of rain, increased winds, and evaporation since the Annual Meeting. As a result, the water level dropped to 1275.40 ft NGVD 29, as of the October 12 measurement; which is 1.68 inches higher than the reading on the same date last year. That equates to a 23.28-inch drop in water level from July to October.

Moral of the story, while we can take precautions to protect our property, shoreline, and structures from low or high water, our only course of action is to let Mother Nature do her thing.

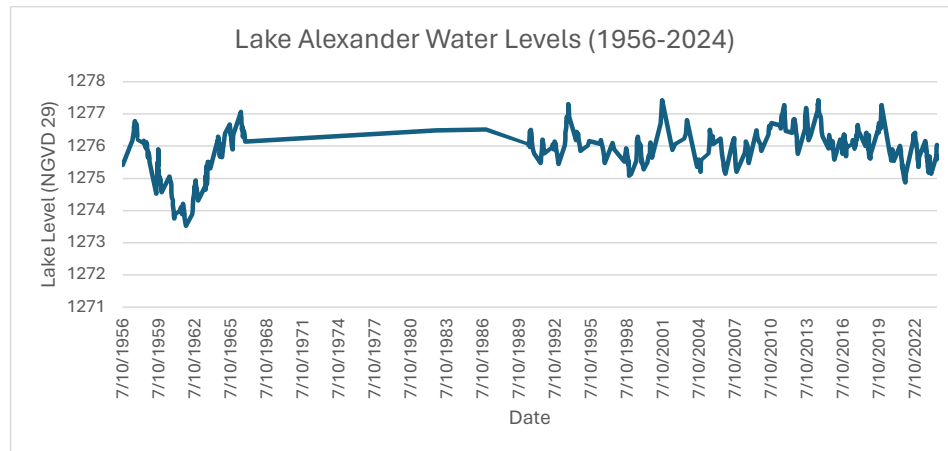


Figure 1: Sourced from data at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/showlevel.html?downum=49007900>

2024 Clean-Up Day Update

Jim McGonigle, LAPOA Board Member

Your lake property association sponsored another successful clean up day Saturday, September 14th. It was a beautiful morning and was an opportunity for all Scandia Valley residents to get rid of old TV's, monitors, printers, mattresses, appliances and tires. LAPOA paid members did receive a \$10 credit on their items. A big thank you to LeMieur Sanitation, Little Falls, for providing the two 30 yard dumpsters and a special thank you to several LAPOA members for volunteering to assist us in loading everything. This was very much appreciated. We did have one glitch this year-the dumpsters were 95% full by 10:30! As a result, after 10:30 we could handle most small items but had to turn away several people with large items. We know they were disappointed. In the future we will encourage area residents to come early if they have big items like mattresses, tires or appliances. In addition, our fliers will state that the clean up day will go to noon, OR UNTIL BINS ARE FULL.

As was the case in 2021, our 2024 clean up day lost approximately \$660. We did plan for this and view the program as a benefit to the entire Scandia Valley area. Due to the demand, we may host the next clean up day in 2 years instead of 3. Who would have thought there were that many big old tube TV's left out there????

Lake Shoreline Habitat Quality Status

Doug Cook, LAPOA Board Member

This past summer Minnesota Public Radio and a tv station ran a series of broadcasts about natural shorelines disappearing from Minnesota lakes due to development, and the negative effect this is having on water quality. Lake Alexander does not score well, getting a low quality habitat rating due to developed shoreline. More than once I heard the question " how can we have a low habitat rating when the lake has so much natural shoreline?" It is a fair question.

When boating on the lake several long stretches of undeveloped shoreline are observed. The problem is, the percentage of developed shoreline (77%) on the lake far exceeds the undeveloped (23%). I wrote an article a few years ago that I would like to reprint:

Lake Alexander Shore Scoring

Providing sufficient habitat is essential for a healthy lake and fish population. Recently the DNR scored the shorelines of Lake Alexander for the presence or absence of quality habitat. Our lake scored 64.7 out of 100, which is low and lower than the state average of 73.6. Read on. (Partial report is reprinted with the permission of the DNR)

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Score the Shore Survey Report

Alexander Lake (DOW# 49007900) - Survey Date: 06/05/2017

Introduction

Shore habitat loss has been identified as the largest problem adversely affecting the health of lakes in the United States (US EPA 2010). Natural lakeshores are unique transition zones between the land and water and provide valuable ecological services that benefit wildlife and water quality. Natural shores may include multiple canopies of habitat from the upland into the water: a mix of live and dead trees, shrubs, wildflowers, grasses and rocks, shallow water plants, and submerged woody habitat. Vegetation traps sediments and nutrients, filters water as it flows from the upland into the lake or river, and reduces wave action that can erode shores. Fish and wildlife use this habitat mosaic in a variety of ways: as shade from sunlight, refuge from predators, spawning and nesting sites, and for foraging. As people recreate and build on lakes critical areas for fish and wildlife and important filtering and stabilization effects are lost. Lake shores change from 'wild' naturally vegetated areas to 'domesticated' sites of turf grass and hard surfaces with sparse or no vegetation.

Site Assessment and Scoring

Surveyors view each site from a boat, categorize the major land use and assess important habitat features in each Zone. A point value, or score is calculated for each site based on whether the individual assessed features represent natural conditions (high score) or indicate human disturbance (low score). Higher scores indicate a greater amount of natural habitat. Lower scores indicate a low percent of the site remains natural and a higher amount has been physically disturbed or altered by humans.

Results

Minnesota DNR Fisheries IBI program staff conducted an assessment of lakeshore habitat on Alexander Lake on Jun 05 2017, following the Score the Shore survey protocols. The assessment consisted of 63 survey sites evenly spaced 400 meters around the lake. The average lake wide habitat score was 64.7 (+/- 3.4), indicating overall lakeshore habitat quality was low (50-65). These sites are typically developed and have a lower than expected amount of natural habitat. Vegetation been removed from at least a portion of the shore frontage either in a small percent of all the canopy layers or from a large percent of at least one canopy layer (ex. shrub layer has been removed but trees and natural ground cover remain high).

Approximately 77 percent of the sites were developed with a mean score of 57.1 (+/- 3.7), while undeveloped sites had a mean score of 91.0 (+/- 2.5).

Conclusion

The results of the survey are not encouraging. The overall lakeshore habitat quality scored low. The good news is that this finding can be reversed if landowners and stakeholders practice shoreline conservation principles by either keeping their shorelines natural or restoring their shorelines to a natural state.

This is why the Property Association is offering owners matching grants to restore their shorelines to a natural state. And it is why we started the Lake Steward program In addition, landowners may be eligible for 50% cost sharing grants from the Soil and Water Conservation District. For more information on these programs you can contact me at my email address on the front page. I can also send the full shore scoring report via email if you request it. Reversing the loss of habitat is critical to the future health of our lake.

You can score your own shore and get started on the Lake Steward Program by taking a short 10 question quiz by going to this link: <https://mnlakesandrivers.org/lake-steward/> and the broadcast on MPR can be found here:

<https://www.mprnews.org/episode/2024/08/13/protecting-minnesotas-vanishing-natural-shorelines>